



The California Prenatal Screening Program

California Department of Public Health
Genetic Disease Screening Program



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GUIDELINES FOR CENTRIFUGING BLOOD SPECIMENS FOR THE CALIFORNIA PRENATAL SCREENING PROGRAM

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There are two reasons to centrifuge specimens for Prenatal Screening:

1. First Trimester specimens **must** be centrifuged, as red blood cells will interfere with first trimester analytes. The specimen will not be analyzed unless it was centrifuged.
2. All Second Trimester specimens should be centrifuged to prevent hemolysis caused by delays or weather.

The best way to ensure that specimens for Prenatal Screening arrive at the Prenatal Screening lab in good condition is to have the patient's blood drawn by professional lab personnel who have access to professional laboratory equipment for proper centrifuging.

If, however, the patient's blood is drawn by doctor's office staff or non-certified phlebotomists, the following guidelines for centrifuging should be followed:

1. Don't refrigerate whole blood specimens prior to centrifuging.
2. Before centrifuging, gently invert the tube 5 times to mix clot activator with blood.
3. Let whole blood stand $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 hour before centrifuging to aid clot formation (which helps prevent the cells from hemolyzing). Observe a dense clot.
4. Centrifuging:
 - a. The centrifuge should be capable of 1100-1300g. If a slower centrifuge is used, cells will not separate properly.
 - b. Centrifuge at least 15 minutes at 1100-1300g or until the barrier forms with clear serum above the gel. When centrifuged completely, the gel separates the clear serum at the top from the red cells at the bottom.
5. Leave the centrifuged specimen in the SST (3.5 ml draw) provided by the Prenatal Screening Program, and mail it to the P.O. Box printed on the mailing label on the lab request form. If sending by courier (preferred), call your Prenatal Screening Coordinator for the courier address.

If there are further questions, please contact your Prenatal Screening Coordinator (listed on all result mailers) or the state Genetic Disease Screening Program at (510) 412-1502; toll free 866-718-7915.